

Message Text

PAGE 01 SAIGON 21367 01 OF 04 211334Z

53

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-14 DPW-01 AID-20

INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 DRC-01 /148 W

----- 068904

O R 211135Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0245

INFO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG THAI

CMDR JCRC NKP THAI

USDEL FPJMT SAIGON

USDEL JEC PARIS

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 4 SAIGON 21367

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, VS

SUBJECT: ICCS: PRESS CONFERENCE OF RELEASED PA&E EMPLOYEE

REF : SAIGON 21295

THIS MESSAGE TRANSMITS TRANSCRIPT OF HOMER ELM PRESS CONFERENCE
11-11:30 A.M, DECEMBER 20;

QUOTE: MR. HICKS: I AM MR. LANDIS HCIKS, GENERAL MANAGER
OF PACIFIC ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS AND I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 SAIGON 21367 01 OF 04 211334Z

TO YOU THIS MORING MR. HOMER LEE ELM, WHO JUST RETURNED FROM A
PERIOD OF APPROXIMATELY 2-1/2 MONTHS OF CAPTIVITY. ONE BEHALF OF
PA&E AND HIS FELLOW EMPLOYEES, WE WOULD LIKE TO INDICATE THAT
WE'RE VERY PLEASED TO HAVE MR. ELM BLACK WITH US, EXPECIALLY BEFORE

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON.

MR. ELM: THANK YOU VERY MUCH MR. HICKS. IT IS VERY NICE TO BE BACK AND THERE WERE A FEW TIMES I DIDN'T KNOW IF I WOULD MAKE IT OR NOT.

MR. HICKS: I KNOW YOU GENTLEMEN WOULD LIKE TO ASK SOME QUESTIONS OF MR. LEM, SO IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY ASK THEM NOW.

Q: HOW WERE YOU CAPTURED? ANY SPECIFICS?

A: YES, I WAS TRAVELING ON HIGHWAY QL 4 BETWEEN BAC LIEU AND SOC TRANG, AND THE PRG ATTACKED THE VEHICLE THAT I WAS DRIVING. UPON MY STOPPING OF THE VEHICLE THEY WERE FILLING THE VEHICLE WITH HOLES. I LAID DOWN IN THE FRONT SEAT OF THE VEHICLE, AND STARTED YELLING OUT, "HOLD IT; HOLD IT, AMERVL CAPTIVITY.

Q: YOU SAID THERE WERE A FEW TIMES YOU THOUGHT YOU WOULDN'T MAKE IT. WHAT WERE THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES?

A: LIKE WHEN THEY WERE FIRING SO MANY WEAPONS AND THINGS AT US-- THE VEHICLE JUMPING UP AND DOWN UPON THE TOUCH OF THE GRENADES OR WHATEVER IT WAS THEY WERE TROWING AT US.

A: WHAT ABOUT DURING THE 2-1/2 MONTHS WHEN YOU WERE IN CAPTIVITY, ANY PROBLEMS?

A: NO, NOT REALLY. JUST NOT KNOWING WHAT THEY WERE GOING TO DO TO US OR IF WE WOULD BE RELEASED ANY TIME SOON OR ANYTHING ELSE.

Q: HOW MANY GUYS WERE THERE WHEN YOU WERE CAPTURED?

A: NEAR AS I CAN RECALL, THERE WERE SIX AT THAT PARTICULAR TIME.

Q: MR. LEM, HOW WERE YOU TREATED WHEN YOU WERE HELD AND WHERE WERE YOU HELD? DO YOU KNOW?

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 SAIGON 21367 01 OF 04 211334Z

A: SIR, I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE EXACTLY WHERE I WAS HELD. I WAS MOVED AROUND QUITE A FEW PLACES--8 TO 10 PLACES.

Q: HOW MANY?

A: BETWEEN 8 TO 10 PLACES WHILE IN CAPTIVITY. THE TREATMENT I RECEIVED WHILE IN CAPTIVITY WAS ADQUATE, VERY GOOD. THEY TRIED THEIR BEST TO TREAT ME VERY NICE.

Q: DID THEY QUESTION YOU AT ANY TIME?

A: WELL, THEY TRIED TO PROVE THAT I WAS AN ADVISER OR SOMETHING TO THE SAIGON FORCES, OR THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARVN UNITS, OR

SOMETHING OF THIS NATURE.

Q: WAS IT A TOUGH INTERROGATION?

A: NON, NOT REALLY. IT WAS MORE LIKE, "WE KNOW YOU SPEAK VIETNAMESE", AND THINGS OF THIS NATURE; I DO NOT SPEAK VIETNAMESE, ONLY A FEW WORDS. AND I AM EX-AIR FORCE AND THEY TRIED TO USE THAT AGAINST ME TO PROVE THAT I WAS IN THE SERVICE AS AN ADVISER.

Q: WERE YOU IN THE SERVICE DURING THE WAR?

A: NO.

Q: HOW ABOUT THE TWO VIETNAMESE GUYS; HOW WERE THEY TREATED?

A: THEY WERE TREATED FAIRLY GOOD ALSO. WE WERE SEPARATED AT VARIOUS TIMES. ONE TIME I DIDN'T SEE THEM FOR OVER A MONTH.

Q: WERE YOU TIED UP?

A: YES, EVERY NIGHT FOR THE FIRST 25 DAYS, I BELIEVE. I WAS TIED BY THE ARMS EVERY NIGHT AND THEN WE WERE MOVED TO ANOTHER LOCATION AND THEY PUT AN IRON BAR WITH A HOIST-TYPE(SIC) THING AROUND MY ANKLES FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS AND THEN REMOVED THAT. AND THEN THEY PUT A CHAIN AND LOCK AROUND MY ANKLE TO KEEP ME FROM ESCAPING FOR APPROXIMATELY 7 OR 8 MORE DAYS AND THEN TOOK THAT OFF. AND I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING FOR THE PAST MONTH AT ALL TO TIE ME UP.

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 SAIGON 21367 01 OF 04 211334Z

Q: HOW DID THEY TELL YOU ABOUT THE NEWS OF YOUR RELEASE? DID THEY JUST SAY, "OKN GO" OR WHAT?

A: WELL, THEY FIRST TOLD US WE WOULD BE RELEASED ON THE SECOND OF NOVEMBER. THIS ONE PARTICULAR COMMANDER STATED WE WERE BEING MOVED TO ANOTHER LOCATION TO WHERE WE WOULD BE RELEASED AND OUR RELEASE DATE WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN THE SECOND OF NOVEMBER. ON 14 NOVEMBER, I BELIEVE IT WAS, THEY CAME TO US AND, AFTER MAKING A FEW REMARKS AND STATEMENTS, AND THIS AND THAT, SAID FOR ME TO GO BACK TO MY HOUSE AND THINK ABOUT BEING RELEASED. AS YOU KNOW, IT WAS THE 19TH OF DECEMBER WHEN I WAS RELEASED.

Q: WAS THERE ANY TIME YOU LOST HOPE YOU MIGHT NOT BE RELEASED?

A: NO.

Q: DID THEY GIVE YOU ANY INDICATION WHY YOU WERE RELEASED AT THIS TIME? ANY INDICATION THAT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE MEETING OF MR. KISSINGER AND MR. THO IN PARIS, OR OF THE ATTACK AGAINST A HELICOPTER THE OTHER DAY WHICH KILLED AN AMERICAN OFFICER?

A: NO. WHAT I THINK, AT LEAST ACCORDING TO THE EXPRESSION OF THINGS

THEY DISPLAYED TO ME, WAS THAT THEY CHECKED ME OUT AND FOUND THAT I WAS A CIVILIAN RATHER THAN A MILITARY ADVISER, AND THEY RELEASED ME.

Q: WHAT MARKINGS DID YOUR VEHICLE CARRY?

A: PA&E/ICCS.

Q: WHERE WERE THEY LOCATED ON THE VEHICLE?

A: ON THE SIDES OF THE VEHICLE AND ON THE BUMPERS.

Q: WAS IT A JEEP, OR WHAT?

A: NO, IT WAS A HALF-TON PICK-UP DODGE.

Q: WOULD YOU GIVE US YOUR FEELINGS OR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE VIET CONG AFTER HAVING SPENT THIS TIME WITH THEM?

BENNETT

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 SAIGON 21367 01 OF 04 211334Z

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 SAIGON 21367 02 OF 04 211421Z

53

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-14 DPW-01 AID-20

INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 DRC-01 /148 W

----- 069289

O R 211135Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0246

INFO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG THAI

CMDR JCRC NKP THAI

USDEL FPJMT SAIGON

USDEL JEC PARIS

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

T

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA
AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 4 SAIGON 21367

OQ IN WHAT WAY WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO EXPRESS MY OPINION?

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THEM AFTER LIVING WITH THEM?

A: WELL, I THINK I'D RATHER NOT ANSWER THAT QUESTION AT THIS TIME.

Q: WHY NOT?

A: PERSONAL.

Q: MR. ELM, WAS THERE ANY TIME YOU GOT INFORMATION THAT SOME
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 SAIGON 21367 02 OF 04 211421Z

OTHER WESTERNERS, LIKE AMERICANS OR NON-VIETNAMESE, WERE ALSO
IN CAPTIVITY BY THE VIET CONG?

A: I RECEIVED NO INDICATION OR INFORMATION AS TO ANY OTHER AMERICAN
OR FOREIGN NATIONALS BEING IN CAPTIVITY, WORKING WITH THEM, OR
ANYTHING ELSE.

Q: MR. ELM, WHAT WAS YOUR DIET LIKE? WHAT DID YOU EAT THERE AND,
ALSO, COULD YOU TELL US WHAT YOUR TESTS HERE HAVE FOUND SO FAR ABOUT
YOUR PHYSICAL CONDITION? HOW MUCH WEIGHT DID YOU LOSE?

A: I HAVEN'T BEEN WEIGHED AT THIS TIME YET, BUT I ESTIMATE BETWEEN
25-30 POUNDS' LOSS OF WEIGHT. THE DIET THERE--THE FOOD THEY PRE-
PARED--WAS THE SAME THEY EAT: RICE, FISH, SHRIMP, EEL, SNAKE, FOX
AND SOUPS WITH VARIOUS TYPE VEGETABLES, OR SOME THINGS THAT LOOK
LIKE TREE LEAVES. THINGS OF THIS NATURE.

Q: UPON YOUR RELEASE, DID THEY REQUEST YOU TO SIGN ANY KIND OF
STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT WHICH--I BASE THIS ON WHAT THEY HAVE DONE
IN THE PAST--APOLOGIZING THAT YOU WERE IN THEIR ZONE, OR SOMETHING
TO THAT EFFECT?

A: YES, BUT NOT AT THAT PARTICULAR POINT; THEY DID NOT REQUEST THIS.
BUT THEY ASKED ME DID I REALIZE MY MISTAKE OF TRAVELING IN A LIBERATE
D
ZONE WITHOUT THE PRG PERMISSION, AND I SIGNED A STATEMENT THAT I DID
REALIZE THAT I WAS AT THE MISTAKE (SIC) BY TRAVELING IN THEIR ZONE
WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION. AND THEY STATED THAT THE VEHICLE ALSO
SHOULD HAVE HAD LIGHTS INSTALLED ON TOP TO DISTINGUISH THAT IT WAS A
CIVILIAN-TYPE VEHICLE, NOT A MILITARY TYPE VEHICLE; AND I TOLD THEM TH
AT
I REALIZED THAT THIS WAS A MISTAKE ALSO.

Q: AT THE TIME, DID YOU STRAY INTO THEIR ZONE BECAUSE OF THE DIFFI-
CULTY TO DETERMINE WHO CONTROLLED WHAT ROAD? HOW DID YOU HAPPEN

TO GET INTO THEIR ZONE?

A: WELL, I WAS TRAVELING ALONG QL 4 HIGHWAY AND, AS FAR AS WE,
AJ
E PARTICULAR TIME, KNEW, IT WAS NOT A LIBERATED ZONE; IT WAS
UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE VIETNAMESE FORCES. VEHICLES COME AND
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 SAIGON 21367 02 OF 04 211421Z

GO EVERY DAY ON THESE PARTICULAR ROADS. IT WAS JUST AN AMBUSH AT
THAT PARTICULAR TIME THAT THEY HAD SET UP.

Q: WHAT TIME OF DAY WAS IT?

A: APPROXIMATELY 1930 HOURS.

Q: 1930?

A: APPROXIMATELY 1930 HOURS.

Q: COULD YOU AGAIN TELL US HOW YOU CHARACTERIZED THE WAY
THAT YOU WERE TREATED?

A: WELL, I THINK I WAS TREATED FAIRLY GOOD. AS I SAY, I ATE THE
TYPE OF FOOD THAT THEY DID. WHEN WE WERE FIRST CAPTURED, AFTER THEY
TOOK US FROM THE VEHICLE AND TOOK US TO THE FIRST HOUSE WE STAYED
IN OVERNIGHT, THEY GAVE ME COFFEE AND, IN FACT, A DRINK OF VIET-
NAMESE WHISKEY. WE STAYED THERE THE FOLLOWING DAY UNTIL ABOUT
5:00 O'CLOCK AND THEN WE TRAVELLED, AND THE TREATMENT THROUGH THE
RICE PADDIES WAS THE WORST TREATMENT THAT I HAD HAD WHILE IN
CAPTIVITY, I THINK.

Q: WERE YOU EVER THREATENED?

A: NO.

Q: MR. ELM, WERE YOU EVER IN DANGER FROM ANY FIGHTING IN YOUR
AREA OR FROM ANY VIETNAMESE AIR STRIKES OR ARTILLERY OR ANYTHING
OF THAT NATURE?

A: WELL, THERE WERE VARIOUS STRIKES--105'S, MORTARS, MINI-GUNS,
MACHINE GUNS--WITHIN ABOUT 1,000 FEET FROM WHERE I WAS AT IN
VARIOUS LOCATIONS.

Q: HOW WERE THE GOVERNMENT STRIKES? THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE?

A: I DID NOT SEE THE AIRCRAFT; I DON'T KNOW. I DID NOT SEE WHO WAS
FIRING. IT COULD HAVE BEEN A TRAINING ZONE AS FAR AS I KNOW.

Q: HOW FAR AWAY FROM YOU DID YOU SAY?
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 SAIGON 21367 02 OF 04 211421Z

A: ABOUT 1,000 FEET, POSSIBLY EVEN A LITTLE BIT CLOSER AT TIMES;
SOME OF THEM FIVE MILES, SOME OF THEM A MILE.

Q: HOW OFTER WAS THAT?

A: SOME OF THE OPERATIONS WERE OVER A MONTH(SIC).

Q: DID IT HAPPEN EVERY DAY, OR WHAT?

A: DAY AND NIGHT.

Q: WERE YOU INJURED IN THE INITIAL AMBUSH?

A: NO.

Q: HOW ABOUT YOUR COMPANIONS?

A: YES, ONE OF THE VIETNAMESE HAD A SLIGHT HEAD WOUND AND A REAL
MINOR LEG WOUND.

Q: DID YOU THINK YOU WERE LUCKY TO GET OUT OF THAT VEHICLE WITHOUT
GETTING INJURED? IT SOUNDS LIKE IT WAS HIT PRETTY BAD.

A: YES, SIR. I FELT VERY, VERY LUCK6; SOMEONE WAS LOOKING AFTER
US.

Q: DO YOU PLAN TO RETURN TO YOUR HOME IN CAN THO?

A: WELL, I PLAN TO CONTINUE TO WORK FOR PA&E. WHERE MY JOB WILL
BE IS UNKNOWN, I THINK, AT THIS TIME.

Q: WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN TOLD ABOUT YOUR CONDITION?

A: NOTHING AT THIS TIME. THEY ONLY STARTED THE TREATMENTS, BGOD
TESTS, X-RAYS SO FAR THIS MORNING. I DON'T KMMMNOW THE OUTCOME
OF ANY OF THIS YET.

Q: MR. ELM, YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR TOUR (SIC) IS CONSIDERED TO BE
IN GVN LAND: 7:30 IS RATHER LATE IN THE AFTERNOON TO BE TRAVELING
AROUND HERE, ISN'T IT?

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 SAIGON 21367 02 OF 04 211421Z

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 SAIGON 21367 03 OF 04 211435Z

53

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-14 DPW-01 AID-20

INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 DRC-01 /148 W

----- 069390

O R 211135Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0247

INFO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG THAI

CMDR JCRC NKP THAI

USDEL FPJMT SAIGON

USDEL JEC PARIS

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

UNCLAS SECTION 3 OF 4 SAIGON 21367

A: WELL, M-16S, AK-47S: THE TYPE OF WEAPONS. I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE HOW MANY OF THEM WENT OFF, BUT THEY HAD M-16S, AK-47S, M-79S, B-40S, AND HAND GRENADES.

Q: YOU MENTIONED SOME AMERICAN WEAPONS THERE; DID YOU GET ANY INDICATION WHERE THEY GET THE AMMUNITION FOR THESE?

A: NO.

Q: (INAUDIBLE)

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 SAIGON 21367 03 OF 04 211435Z

A: PARDON?

Q: IT WAS YOU WHO SHOUTED TO THEM THAT THERE WAS AN AMERICAN ABOARD?

A: YES, I WAS SHOUTING IN ENGLISH THAT THERE WAS AN AMERICAN. THE TWO VIETNAMESE WERE ALSO SHOUTING IN VIETNAMESE SOME WORDS THAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

Q: HOW MUCH TRAVELING DID YOU DO?

A: HOW MUCH TRAVELING DID I DO?

Q: YES, WHEN YOU WERE CAPTURED, HOW MUCH DID THEY MOVE YOU

AROUND?

A: I WAS AT APPROXIMATELY A TOTAL OF PROBABLY TEN LOCATIONS. ONE PLACE I WOULD BE IN FOR MAYBE TWO HOURS; THEY WOULD MOVE US TO ANOTHER PLACE--MIGHT BE FOR TEN DAYS, FOURTEEN DAYS. THE LAST PLACE I STAYED THE LONGEST. IT WAS FROM 31 OCTOBER TO 17 DECEMBER.

Q: DID YOU STAY IN VIET CONG CAMPS OR STAY IN VIET CONG VILLAGES?

A: NO, NO VILLAGES. EVERYTHING WAS SMALL VIET CONG CAMPS.

Q: WHAT SORT OF FORCE WERE YOU WITH--WAS IT A MAIN FORCE UNIT OR PREVILLAN (B) UNIT? HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE AROUND YOU?

A: IT IS HARD TO SAY. THERE WERE SO MANY PEOPLE COMING AND GOING. YOU KNOW, NOT REALLY KNOWING THE PEOPLE, YOU CAN SEE THEM THREE TIMES AND MAYBE YOU CAN THINK THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE--SO IT IS REALLY HARD TO SAY. THERE WERE VARIOUS LOCATIONS I WAS AT. I WOULD SAY THERE WERE QUITE A FEW PEOPLE AROUND THAT WERE VIET CONG.

Q: MR. ELM, ACTUALLY, HOW DID THEY SET YOU FREE? DID THEY JUST POINT YOU DOWN THE ROAD AND SAY; "WALK"?

A: NO, THEY PUT US IN A WATER TAXI--ONE OF THE BOATS THAT CARRY MAYBE ABOUT 80-100 PEOPLE--WITH AN ESCORT TO GET US THROUGH UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 SAIGON 21367 03 OF 04 211435Z

SUPPOSEDLY PRG OR VIET CONG CHECKPOINTS. AFTER THE FIRST CHECKPOINT, HE GOT OFF AND WE GOT TO THE SECOND CHECKPOINT, AND WE WERE HELD THERE MOMENTARILY FOR A FEW MINUTES. I DIDN'T KNOW IF THE GUARD COULDN'T READ, OR WHAT, BUT WE HAD THIS RELEASE STATEMENT--KIND OF PASS AFFAIR WITH US--AND HE HAD TO SHOW IT TO SOME

-

ONE ELSE AND WE WERE RELEASED. THE NEXT CHECKPOINT WE CAME TO WAS AN ARVN CHECKPOINT AND THEY REMOVED US FROM THE BOAT AND CALLED THE PROVINCE CHIEF. HE FLEW HIS HELICOPTER DOWN AND PICKED US UP AND CARRIED US TO VI THANH.

Q: DID THE ARVN KNOW WHO YOU WERE?

A: WELL, THE ARVN HAD HEARD OF US. IT WAS A "QC CANH-SAT" TYPE CHECKPOINT CAMP, I WOULD SAY.

Q: MR. ELM, FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES, WHAT IS YOUR IMPRESSION ABOUT HOW MUCH TERRITORY AND PEOPLE THE VIET CONG CONTROL IN THAT AREA WHICH YOU WERE?

A: SIR, I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW MUCH THEY DID REALLY CONTROL. IT SEEMS TO ME LIKE THEY HAVE PRETTY FREE PASSAGE, ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT, THE WAY THE AMOUNT OF PEOPLE YOU SEE RIDING UP AND DOWN

THE LITTLE CANALS OR CHANNELS, ACROSS THE RICE PADDIES. IF THERE ARE NOT A LOT OF VIET CONG, THERE ARE A LOT OF SYMPATHIZERS.

Q: WHAT WAS THE MOOD OF THE PEOPLE YOU WERE WITH? DID THEY SEEM OPTIMISTIC, OR PESSIMISTIC, BEATEN OR WHAT?

A: WELL, NO, THEY SEEM TO THINK NOW SINCE THE AMERICANS ARE NOT HERE WITH THEIR 540,000 TROOPS--THEY KEPT SAYING THAT THEY (THE AMERICANS) WOULD NOT DEFEAT THE VIET CONG--THEN THEY WILL WIN THE WAR IN THE FUTURE, IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

Q: THEY SEEM VERY UPPISH.

A: YES, THEY SEEM TO THINK THEY WILL OVERCOME THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES.

Q: DID YOU KNOW THE NAME OF THE VILLAGE WHERE THEY ACTUALLY RELEASED YOU?
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 SAIGON 21367 03 OF 04 211435Z

A: NO. IT WAS IN A VILLAGE, TO A CERTAIN EXTENT. IT WAS JUST A FEW HOUSES ALONG THE RIVER AND WHEN THE WATER TAXI CAME BY, ABOUT SIX OF THE VIET CONG WENT OUT AND STOPPED THE BOAT AND THEN THE SUPERIOR-TYPE COMMANDER, AS THEY CALLED HIM, WENT ABOARD THE BOAT TO TALK TO THE PEOPLE AND EXPLAINED THAT WE WOULD BE COMING ABOARD AND I GUESS NOT TO HARM US AND THINGS OF THIS NATURE.

Q: ABOUT HOW LONG WOULD YOU SAY THE TRIP WAS?

Q: I REALLY DON'T KNOW. YOU RIDE A BOAT FOR, SAY TWO OR THREE HOURS, AND YOU GET IN A HELICOPTER AND YOU GO LIKE THE CORW FLIES. IT WOULD REALLY BE HARD TO SAY; IT IS NOT BY ROAD.

Q: WHAT DID YOU DO WITH YOUR FREE TIME? WAS THERE ANY KIND OF A ROUTINE OR JUST NOTHING TO DO?

A: WELL, THERE WAS REALLY NOTHING TO DO. FOR INSTANCE, THE LAST MAJOR CAMP I WAS IN THE LONGEST, THEY LET ME OUT AFTER SO LONG FROM THE BUILDING, AND I WOULD GO EAT WITH THEM. THEN I WOULD GO BACK AND LAY DOWN IN MY MOSQUITO NET AND I'D STAY THERE, EXCEPT TO GO EAT OR WHENEVER THEY WOULD CALL ME TO THEIR TENT TO TRY TO ASK ME A QUESTION OR SO.

Q: WERE YOU WITH LOCAL GUERRILLAS THE ENTIRE TIME, OR DID YOU EVER SEE ANY EVIDENCE OF OUTSIDERS SUCH AS NORTH VIETNAMESE IN LOCAL UNIFORMS?

A: NO, I NEVER SEEN ANYONE OTHER THAN THE REGULAR...I WOULD SAY THE LOCAL (INAUDIBLE) TROOPS. I DIDN'T SEE ANY UNIFORMS AT ALL.

Q: THEY WERE ALL DRESSED IN VARIOUS CLOTHES?

A: VARIOUS CLOTHES, YES.

Q: DID THEY TRY TO GIVE YOU ANY POLITICAL LECTURES OR TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE AMERICAN ROLE HERE, OR TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY WANTED TO DO? DID THEY TRY TO CHANGE YOUR MIND OR ANYTHING?

A: WELL, NOT TO THAT EXTENT. THEY TRIED TO GET ME TO SAY THINGS ABOUT THE AMERICAN IMPERIALISTS, THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT AS THEY UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 SAIGON 21367 03 OF 04 211435Z

CALL THEM--PRESIDENT THIEU'S GOVERNMENT, THE SOUTH VIETNAM GOVERNMENT--WHICH I REFUSED TO DO. THEY DIDN'T TRY TO CONVERT ME OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT.

Q: THEY DIDN'T GIVE YOU INDOCTRINATION LECTURES?

A: NO. THEIR TROOPS THEY GAVE EVERY DAY, AN HOUR OR TWO HOURS; BUT I WASN'T INVOLVED.

Q: WHAT WAS THE LIFE OF THE TROOPS THAT YOU SAW? YOU SAY YOUR LIFE WAS PRETTY DULL, ROUTINE: WHAT WERE THEY DOING?

A: THE ONES IN THE CAMPS WERE ABOUT THE SAME. THE MAJORITY OF THEM, I WOULD SAY, WERE BETWEEN 16 AND 25 YEARS OLD--AT LEAST THE ONES I'VE SEEN. THEY PLAYED WHEN THEY DIDN'T HAVE SOME WORK, LIKE COOKING, GETTING WOOD, OR SOMETHING OF THIS NATURE TO DO. THEY KIND OF PLAYED AROUND OR SLEPT.
BENNETT

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 SAIGON 21367 04 OF 04 211443Z

53

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-14 DPW-01 AID-20

INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 DRC-01 /148 W

----- 069501

O R 211135Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0248

INFO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

CINCPAC
COMUSSAG THAI
CMDR JCRC NKP THAI
USDEL FPJMT SAIGON
USDEL JEC PARIS
AMCONSUL CAN THO
AMCONSUL DANANG
AMCONSUL BIEN HOA
AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

UNCLAS SECTION 4 OF 4 SAIGON 21367

Q: DID THEY SEEM TO BE REAR AREA TROOPS?

A: I WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT THE REAR-OR FRONT-ECHELON AREA LOOKS LIKE.

Q: MR. ELM, CAN YOU GO BACK TO YOUR STATEMENT, WHERE YOU SAID THEY SEEM TO HAVE FREE PASSAGE ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT, AND IF THERE AREN'T A LOT OF VIET CONG THERE ARE A LOT OF SYMPATHIZERS? CAN YOU GO ON A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT? HOW DO YOU MEAN THAT?

A: WELL, FOR INSTANCE, LIKE THIS ONE CAMP I WAS IN WAS RIGHT ALONG THIS SMALL CANAL, AND I COULD NOT SEE THIS CANAL FROM THE AIR...AT LEAST YOU DIDN'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO SEE IT FROM THE AIR...AND YOU WOULD SEE AS HIGH AS SIX VIET CONG WITH AK-47S AND SIDE ARMS AND UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 SAIGON 21367 04 OF 04 211443Z

WHAT HAVE YOU, UP AND DOWN THE RIVER AT ALL VARIOUS TIMES OF THE DAY AND NIGHT.

Q: HOW ABOUT CIVILIANS? DID YOU SEE EVIDENCE OF CIVILIANS LIVING AT THE VIET CONG ZONES YOU WERE IN?

A: WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WOMEN AND CHILDREN?

Q: WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

A: SEVERAL PLACES WE WERE IN, YES, (THEY) HAD THEIR WIVES, CHILDREN AND ALL, RIGHT THERE WITH THEM.

Q: HOW ABOUT PEOPLE LIVING THERE? WERE THEY WORKING FARMS OR WORKING RICE PADDIES?

A: YES. THE PEOPLE IN SOME, LIKE, YOU KNOW, A SIX-BUILDING VILLAGE OR SOMETHING--HAMLET, OR WHATEVER YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IT. THERE WOULD BE PEOPLE THERE TENDING THEIR GARDEN OR CROPS, OR WHAT HAVE YOU.

Q: MR. ELM, HAVE YOU BEEN SICKLY IN YOUR EXPERIENCE?

A: ONLY A COLD AND HEADACHE OCCASIONNY.

Q: WHAT DID THEY GIVE YOU?

A: THEY GAVE ME APV FOR A HEADACHE AND SOME OTHER TYPE OF PILL OR SOMETHING FOR A COLD.

Q: YOU HAVE TOLD US THAT ONE OF YOUR COMPANIONS HAD BEEN WOUNDED. THAT KIND OF TREATMENT DID HE RECEIVE?

A: THE ONLY TREATMENT HE RECEIVED...I THINK IT WAS PROBABLY THE THIRD NIGHT OR SO WHEN WE WERE TAKEN FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER. WE ARRIVED THERE AND THEY SHAVED AROUND THE WOUND ON HIS HEAD AND LOOKED AT IT, AND THAT WAS THE TREATMENT HE RECEIVED.

Q: WAS THAT MR. MANH OR MR. NHU?

A: MR. MANH.

Q: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN VIETNAM?

A: I HAVE BEEN OVER HERE, TOTAL, ROUGHLY, ABOUT FOUR AND A HALF YEARS.

Q: ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO GOING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS?

A: WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE GOING HOME NOW OR NOT. I HAVE SOME PERSONAL THINGS I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF BEFORE I CAN THINK ABOUT GOING BACK TO THE STATES.

Q: HAVE YOU TALKED TO YOUR FAMILY IN THE STATES?

A: NOT YET, NO. I DIDN'T HAVE THE ADDRESS OR TELEPHONE NUMBER, BUT I HAVE HANDED THE TELEPHONE NUMBER AND I PLAN, AS SOON AS I LEAVE HERE, TO TRY TO GET A CALL THROUGH TO MY MOTHER.

MR. HICKS: GENTLEMEN, ANY OTHER QUESTIONS? UNQUOTE
BENNETT

UNCLASSIFIED

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONNEL, PRESS CONFERENCES, POW RETURN
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 DEC 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON21367
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731256/abqcehub.tel
Line Count: 664
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 13
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kellerpr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28-Nov-2001 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <18-Jan-2002 by kellerpr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ICCS: PRESS CONFERENCE OF RELEASED PA&E EMPLOYEE
TAGS: MARR, VS, ICCS, PA & E, (ELM, HOMER)
To: STATE INFO BUDAPEST
JAKARTA
TEHRAN
WARSAW
CINCPAC
COMUSSAG THAI
CMDR JCRC NKP THAI

FPJMT SAIGON
JEC PARIS
CAN THO
DANANG
CAN THO
NHA TRANG

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005